



Shasta County Farm Bureau

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September 20, 1999

Mr. Lester Snow
Cal-Fed Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, Ca 95814

Re: Comments on FINAL EIR/EIS

Dear Mr. Snow:

In addition to being president of the Shasta County Farm Bureau representing 2000 members, I am an agricultural producer in Northern California. At this time I would like to remind you of your basic mission: coordinating a plan to assure reliable, high-quality water for California's people while addressing bay-delta environmental problems. This can not be done by duplicating efforts and extending boundaries to unmanageable limits.

The production of food and fiber depends on land and water. Water rights are very precious to agriculture in Shasta County. Many families have rights going back a hundred years or more; they are part of the property rights bundle. These families depend on water rights as an integral part of their operation. It is extremely important that these rights are respected and strengthened, not whittled away and used as part of the solution. The government's long-standing promise to protect regions where water originates must be honored. We must not forget, California's farmland is a natural resource of global significance. Without water and the strength of our water rights, this resource will be lost forever.

The conversion of ag land may seem like a simple solution. I warn it will only be short term. The long-term ramifications will be serious. The retiring of hundreds of thousand of acres of productive farmland would hurt the economy and decimate farm communities where a family's livelihood is cemented in agriculture.

Increased storage capacity must be part of the solution. The fact is, California has a shortage of water and the only way to solve it is to create new sources. Taking water from one person and giving it to someone else is not a solution; it only creates another problem. Farmers, industries and urban dwellers will continue improving efficiency of water use, but improved efficiency can't offset the huge increase in demand that will be driven by California's rapidly increasing population. The possibility of new dams and off site storage

must be looked at as part of the solution. The needs of the environment and the population can not be met without new sources.

Don't forget the people. Millions of people will be affected by Cal-Fed's decision, yet the program is focused on fish and wildlife habitat. Many of the actions designed to help fish will hurt people. Actions that take farmland out of production will affect farmers, farmworkers, truck drivers, cannery workers, warehouse workers, people who operate small businesses throughout rural California, and consumers who benefit from a healthy, locally produced food supply. The current system is continually pitting fish against people. Under current environmental laws, there is no contest, fish win every time. The current Cal-Fed plan continues this disturbing trend. A system must be developed where fish and people both win.

Cal-Fed must not base it's solutions on the redirection of agricultural water or the conversion of farmland. We want Cal-Fed to succeed, but we won't accept solutions that don't benefit agriculture in our region and statewide. California should be looking to move into the 21st century, not returning to the 18th century. We owe it to our children to plan for our future.

Sincerely,


Kurt Urricelqui
President